CHAPTER

26

Ancient Mystery Initiation: Toxic Priestesses and Vaginal Communion

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Toxicology in Antiquity
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-815339-0.00026-3

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26.1 INTRODUCTION

Ancient Mediterranean religious rites preserve evidence for the practice of a unique polyvalent pharmacy in which the human body was used to process, store, and administer ritual communal substances along with their so-called antidotes. Colleges of priestesses—environments in which women were recognized as physicians, oracles, and experts in the art of drug preparation—promoted the development of compound mixtures of plant- and animal-derived toxins that were used in rites meant to induce observable psychosis in voluntary human subjects. Cult members participating in these mystery operations consumed the blood, breast milk, and vaginal excreta of priestesses who were themselves chronically exposed to viperid venoms by means of vaginal suppositories and self-induced dermal lacerations. The consumption of a priestess' medicated body fluids within the context of private and semipublic initiation rituals was considered the culmination of an initiate's personal religious experience, a form of divine marriage.

Communal substances, administered to initiates during ritual sex acts, formed an important and complex component of ancient mystery religion performances. Drug concoctions, compounded by specialist priestesses, contained numerous plant- and animal-derived toxins, creating a complex pharmacological process whereby communal drug mixtures induced a much-desired ecstatic psychosis in participants while concomitantly protecting these same subjects from the adverse side effects of venom and toxin exposure.

Using the technical language developed by Late Bronze Age (c. 1200−1000 BC) mystery religions preserved within classical Greek and Latin religious and medical texts, it is possible to trace these sophisticated pharmaceutical practices back to a single priesthood and its founding priestess. Medea (Μήδεια, Gk.), an historically prominent monarch of the eastern Black Sea kingdom of Colchis (modern Republic of Georgia) was considered the most drug-savvy priestess of her generation and the founder of what has come to be known by historians as the Orphic Mysteries.

Medea was credited with the development of unique snake-derived concoctions as instruments of religious practice and general health. Her research can only be described as a period-specific, uniquely pioneering combination of gynecology, pharmaceutical experimentation, and religious ritual. Medea was so popular with her contemporaries that the Medes claimed to have changed their cultural identity from Aryan to Medic in order to recognize her as their ultimate patroness. In addition to establishing numerous temples in the Hellenic world, Medea founded the famous eastern religious fraternity of drug-using philosopher-physicians known as the Magi.

Classical Greek and Roman literary sources considered the toxicological experimentation of ancient mystery priesthoods with potentially lethal venoms to be the foundational spark of all Western medicine. In this way, the Greco-Roman world believed pharmacy as a science, was developed directly from the invention of communal toxicological practices designed to balance the desired effects of venoms with unwanted side effects. Western pharmacy, as we know and practice it, developed from experimentation with drugs employed in sexually explicit mystery religion rituals.

26.2 TOXIC PRIESTESSES AND THEIR MYSTERY RITES

The Drakaina—or Dragon Priestess—was a prominent presiding authority in the performance of ancient mystery initiations.[1] Considered to be masters-of-poisons, dragon priestesses performed necromantic initiation rituals meant to induce a resurrection-state in novitiates, a process called "new-birth." This metaphysical transformation was viewed as the soul's entrance into the *aion* (αιών), a transdimensional space that simultaneously bounded and encompassed—in terms of ancient physics—the time stream of the material cosmos.[2]

After ancient mystery initiates received "aionic life" (a term translated into English as "eternal life"), they took up, as a brotherhood, the practice of a rigorous religious discipline known simply as "the Way."[3] This new-birth of mystery initiates was accomplished by the

[1]The Drakaina, or δράκαινα, was said to bring about her powers by mixing/preparing drugs in potable or consumable form. There are numerous named Drkakainai, among the most famous being Clytemnestra. Aristophanes was accused of profaning (revealing) the Mysteries in his trilogy on Orestes. In his *Libation Bearers*, Aeschylus records that the Drakaina produced and administered a mixture of blood and milk after being bitten in the breast by a snake/dragon (514 ff.) Orestes even describes his own "snakeification" or transformation into the Dragon. (Line 549: ἐκδρακοντωθεὶς δ᾽ ἐγὼ, "I myself too have brought out the dragon.")

[2]On αιών: The aion was not only the "space" surrounding the time stream, but also a divinity directly linked with the performance of mysteries. Aion was the Orphic Protogonid divinity known as Phanes and pictured as emerging from an egg wrapped in snakes. He was considered the guardian of the Oracle of Night, herself an Echidnaic deity.

[3]The earliest Orphic use of the term "the way" can be found in the *Hymns*, where the concept is linked to the functioning of Hecate and the Bacchic "third time" of the Aionic cycle. The first hymn is addressed to *Hecate* (#1) and opens with multiple epithets for goddess of "the way" (e.g., εἰνόδιος or "goddess of the way").

consumption of a compound drug mixture followed by the supplemental ingestion of blood, milk, and ejaculate derived from an "only-begotten savior" belonging to the "kingdom of God."[4]

The dragon-priestess, herself an immaculate virgin and "only-begotten" child of God, was responsible within her cult for "burning off the mortality" of newborns.[5] This process involved a complex magico-medical procedure and employed numerous botanically and zoologically derived pharmaceuticals.[6] Priestesses chronically exposed newborns to the fumes of compound incense mixtures while applying dermal salves. This process of subjecting a child "to the fires" became codified in numerous myths related to popular mystic figures.[7]

The specific rubrics of ancient mystery initiation ceremonies were intentionally preserved in the writings of Greek and Etruscan priests and priestesses in the form of mythic narratives characterized by the use of a highly specific ritual vocabulary (John Lydus, *De Ostentis. 2.6. B*). This cult *vox*, a religious "voice," was characteristic of the language of the mysteries.[8]

These practices involved the use of venoms of a wide variety of snake species. Milked venoms were added to compound healing ointments and applied to dermal lacerations made on human subjects during ritual cutting or whipping. Sometimes these subjects were

[4]A single technical vocabulary in Greek was used in the performance of pagan and Christian mysteries. Otto Kern in his edition of the *Orphic Fragments* recognized this as the *vox Orphica*. The Greek words for "savior" (σωτήρ) and "only-begotten" (μονογενής) are Orphic technical terms employed in pre-Classical religion.

[5]Apollonius, *Argonautica*. 4.869–72.

[6]Apollonius Arg. 4:1135 ff. refers to the Mystis (μύστις), the mystery priestess who nursed Dionysus; the infant god, like Achilles, was "brought through the fire." Achilles was reportedly the only one of his siblings to survive the "fire." Mystis (whose name means "initiator"), Medea's Cytaean maids, various nymphs, and other pharmacomagical practitioners are credited with the production and administration of a serous vaginal exudate that was mixed with sacramental compound drug concoctions. See Apollonius on λευκόν: ἄνθεα δέ σφιν νύμφαι ἀμεργόμεναι λευκοῖς ἐνὶ ποικίλα κόλποις. LSJ: λευκόν: 5. [select] τὰ λ. the menstrua alba of young girls.

[7]The most famous example being Demophoon's submission to the rite by the goddess Demeter as she searches for her abducted daughter Kore as seen in the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*, 231ff. The episode of passing a child "through the fires" is prohibited in the book of Leviticus (Ch 18–20), where it is compared to an act of sexual adultery in meeting with the mystery standard of the "holy union" between the initiate and the god.

[8]The *vox Orphica* is a term used by Otto Kern, editor of the *Orphic Fragments*. It denotes a technical language employed by mystery religion participants.

infants who had been "devoted" to a temple or had been given up for adoption to oracular sisterhoods.[9]

The ancient prophetic voice was considered to be accessible only to those influenced by the "divine sprit" while following "the Way." Under the mental sway of a *Drakaina's* sexual "anointing," the initiate was said to become a guardian of an oracular voice; the bearer of the ambrosial word (λόγος, Gk.) of God.

26.3 COLLEGES OF ECHIDNAE

Dragon-priestesses from the Late Mycenaean Bronze Age (c. 1200–1000) as presented in Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic literature (c. 900–100 BC), present all the characteristics of professional associations or colleges concerned with the perpetuation of the mysteries and their associated drug rites. Evidence of priestly colleges is reflected in both the mythic background of widespread religious rites as well as the specific drugs and drug-associated rites used by particular cults and the representation of these drugs in ancient pharmaceutical literature. For example, mystery-rite priestesses known as *Echidnae* (the Greek word for viper) ritually employed viperid venom along with numerous standardized "antidotes" needed to ameliorate the negative side effects these venoms produced. *Echidnae* priestesses were almost exclusively depicted in art and literature in association with serpents, pharmaceuticals, and ritual magic.

The titles used by *Echidnae* priestesses derived from their own peculiar duties within the mystery rite itself; descriptive titles were given to women and girls involved with varying aspects of the rite. For example, the *Medusae* (Medusae, L.) were female temple guardians infamously equipped with arrows made lethal when drawn through the guardian's poisoned hair.[10] The serpentine locks of the *Drakaina* and her assistants were pretreated with concoctions containing numerous poisons.[11] These *Medusae* were said to be able to paralyze, or "turn to stone," anyone

[9]Adoption or "devotion" to a temple was a widespread practice in the ancient Mediterranean. Numerous literary figures are either adopted by priesthoods or spend time as children under the tutelage of religious organizations. For example, Ion (pagan) and St. Mary (Christian) were both devoted to temple service, while Achilles, Jason, and Hercules were all directly connected with pharmaceutically savvy mystic tutors.

[10]Echidnae priestesses are classically portrayed as having oiled hair, full of vipers. For example, see Lucan, *Civil War*. 6.490. Bacchus and his followers were also characterized by the wearing of vipers in the hair: Euripides, *Bacchae*. 99–104.

[11]The "arrow toxins" in ancient Greek literature represent a group of botanical and animal-derived toxins/venoms. They are among the sacramental "drinks" for which Scribonius Largus prescribes antidotes. *Compositiones* #188 ff.

who dared to approach a dragon priestess or oracle without her explicit consent.[12]

Medea, the founder of the poison-wielding Medo-Persian Magi, bore the same priestly linguistic root (*med-*) in her name, and was said to be both the first priestess of the Dragon-priesthood as well as "the most accomplished in drug use." The same root (*med-*) is found in Latin words connected to the practice of the "*medicus*" (physician).[13]

26.4 COMMUNAL IOS-RITE

Dragon priestesses entered an ecstatic or Bacchic state of mania, during which they claimed to experience and influence transdimensional forces or "daimones" (demons) by manipulating "waves" of time–space distortions produced by "darkened stars."[14] The Greeks used the word ἔνθεος to describe this strange star-induced ecstasy, and mystics claimed it was part of a process of manifesting the "god within the breast" of the initiate.[15] In antiquity, entheogenic drugs, administered in concert with sexual acts, were considered an avenue for facilitating a sacred mystery union of an initiate and a divinity; this union was considered a "divine marriage."[16]

Dragon priestesses used their own bodies to mix, store, and administer ritual drugs. The vagina (κόλπος) and breasts of priestesses became

[12]The Echidnaic Medusae were featured as arrow-wielding guardians of Diana's priestess in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*. Orestes, even unbound, is unable to approach the priestess because of their presence.

[13]On the significance and derivation of the Med-root, see: Thelma Karen (1951).

[14]κῦμα (G.) "waves" or botanical "sprout." The metaphysical mechanism of harnessing a "dark star" for interdimensional travel between the Orphic terrestrial realm and the realm of the underworld is featured in Claudian's *Rape of Proserpine*. Claudian mentions numerous mystery cult-related mythological themes, as well as a description of the use of arrow poisons (toxins) in the midst of a description of transdimensional travel (179–203). According to John Lydus, the Etruscans taught that myth was a means of conveying complex interdimensional physics to limited chronic beings. That is, myth was allegory invented by Etruscan (and early Roman) priests in order to encode their rites. See Lydus De Ostentis 2.6.B.

[15]ἔνθεος, to indicate an intoxicated state of "the god in the breast" is used as early as the Orphic hymns (pre-Classical) and as late as the epic poetry of Nonnos (late Roman Empire). It is an epithet of Bacchic divinities involved with ecstatic states, and was a technical term of the *vox Orphica*.

[16]A good example of the ios-rite "gamos" or "sacred union" can be found in Euripides' account of the union of Apollo and Creusa. *Ion* 887ff. In this passage, Creusa inserts meadow saffron into her vagina.

biological synthesizers of sacred communal substances.[17] Priestesses performed sexually explicit dances accompanied by ecstatic songs and incantations that culminated in the forced ejaculation of drugged, physically restrained, partially paralyzed initiates.[18] During the performance of these mysteries, initiates consumed the vaginal and mammary excretions of the *Echidnae* priestesses. Deprived of the bodily fluids of these priestesses, the rite was reportedly fatal.[19]

Ancient mystery initiation was an elegant feat of biochemical engineering staged as a profoundly influential religious performance; ancient communion was quite simply the ritual exchange of medicated bodily fluids between priestesses and novitiates.[20] The ecstasy experienced during these rites was notorious. The breast milk, ejaculate, and blood of participants contained seemingly innumerable physiologically active compounds directly credited with producing the profound physical and mental symptoms endured by religious initiates.[21] This interplay between drugs and the human body was the basis of the Western concept of communion.

26.5 THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE RITUAL

The central scientific premise of ancient ritual initiations was a recognition of the innate tendency of drugs to interact with each other and

[17]The Latin term for the body as a vessel used to prepare drugs was "officina" and was used by Horace to describe the power of the witch Canidia in her use of Colchian drugs (*Epodes* 17.35).

[18]The rite was satirized by Petronius: Satyricon, 131.

[19]Seneca (*Hercules on Oeta*) chooses the theme of death brought about by the use of the *ios*-rite drug bereft of its corresponding "antidote." Seneca elaborates on the specific symptoms of *ios*-poisoning found both in Galen and Nicander. In addition, Seneca relates Orphic mystery initiation to the action of the play: 299–306.

[20]Mystery initiation drugs were known abortifacients. Jerome laments the use of these abortifacients by "lost Christian virgins" who perform ritual acts involving intoxicants: Jerome, *Letters*. 22.

[21]See: Scholia on Theocritus' iunx: Scholiast directly asserts that the sexual union (i.e., Zeus and Maiden or Zeus and the Hera) is the female *pharmaceutizing* the Zeus. The Greek verb φαρμακεύω, "to apply the pharmakon" (φάρμακον) connotes the application of drugs in the process of sexual engagement. The Victorian minds behind the authoritative LSJ lexicon considered this combination of drugs and sexuality to be an act of the female "charming" the male. The pharmakon, or drug, then becomes the sexual excreta of the female partner; sometimes referred to as "ambrosia" or "honey." The process of applying/administering these drugs/sexual rites was called φαρμακεία (pharmakeia), or in less-than-modern parlance, "sorcery."

the human body in ways that potentiate or augment their observable physiological effects. This basic but sophisticated pharmaceutical observation formed much of the intellectual foundation of classical alchemy, magic, and women's medicine. Ancient priestesses saw the rational and explicable interaction of drugs with the human body as the material basis for genuine religious experience; ancient magic was considered a mastery of elemental transformation.

The mystery rites of the *Echidnae* priestesses centered on the use of "*ios*," a family of animal-derived poisons used widely in antiquity as lethal toxins applied to projectiles. Wounds inflicted by ancient "arrow poisons"—as they were known—were considered potentially lethal and oftentimes completely untreatable.[22] *Ios* (ιός, Gk.), translated as "poison" or "venom," was associated with bodily fluids produced by "mania-inducing" creatures, including, among others, the venoms of numerous snake species.[23]

Ios venom was said to produce a maddening mental state the Greeks termed oistros (οἶστρος). Eye-witness accounts of physicians and priests depict people under the influence of these arrow poisons as suffering from an acute and potentially dangerous psychosis;[24] consumers of arrow poisons reportedly suffered horrifying visual hallucinations and severe delirium that sometimes led to acts of violence and even murder.[25] Those with access to *ios*-related drugs in extra-religious settings—like Roman taverns—could be seen roaming the streets of large cities, often crawling on-all-fours while vocalizing like herd animals; some religious zealots under the influence of arrow poisons even made a practice of occupying public squares and busy thoroughfares where they railed about invisible, greed-punishing demons and the coming apocalyptic doom of the greed-stricken "generation of iron."[26]

[22]Oenonoe, first wife of Paris, herself skilled in drugs (φαρμακουργός), recognized the lethality of the arrow poison that struck her unfaithful husband. Lycophron, *Alexandra*. 61–64.

[23]Arrows dipped in ios were considered "burning poisons." Heracles' was famous for his arrows covered in the burning ios. See Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica*. 1.107 ff. Ios was also associated with "burning" sexual passion. Jerome addressed the impropriety of using intoxicants in ritual to enflame passion: Jerome, *Letters*. 52. Heracles death was attributed to the same poison: Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica* 4. 38. 1.

[24]Scribonius, *Compositiones* #194. Scribonius, a Roman military doctor (I CE), includes "Toxicum" a literal "arrow poison" used as a drink in ritual initiation in his discussion of the *mala medicamenta:* drugs developed from venoms that could be lethal or curative.

[25]Nicander, *Alexipharmaca*. 207 ff.

[26]See Nicander, *Alexipharmaca*. 1–259, where the priest/physician discusses the oracular uses of *ios*-related drugs. See also Scribonius, *Compositiones* #139.

26.6 A COMBINATION OF POISONS AND ANTIDOTES

The maddening effects of the arrow poisons were considered to be a form of Bacchic ecstasy, a type of religious possession; an inspiration or indwelling of the "divine spirit." The goal of this Bacchic initiation was the union of the initiate with the voice of the divinity possessing the priestess. The temporary, and oftentimes disorienting mania, was the desired outcome of these drug-induced mysteries.[27] Adverse effects of the *ios*-rite, like excessive sweating, painful burning sensations, spasms, and uncontrollable bleeding were all considered treatable or amenable with the application-specific compound "antidotes."[28]

The *Echidnae* used the colorless, serous breast exudate of prepubertal female attendants—under the influence of chronic viper venom administration—as one means of ameliorating the side effects of the *ios*-rite.[29] This so-called "virgin milk" acted as the rite's antidote to the administered arrow poison.

Priests and physicians viewed breast milk as blood transformed by mammary tissue into a fine, nourishing substance with the same physical properties as semen.[30] "Virgin-milk" was not considered to be simply the product of the female, developing breast, but a fortified drug capable of conferring upon its recipient the peculiar, healthy, inspired nature of its biologic source.[31]

[27]Olympias, the mother of Alexander the Great, infamously partook in these Bacchic, Echidnaic rites: "...all the women of these parts were addicted to the Orphic rites and the orgies of Dionysus from very ancient times (being called Klodones and Mimallones) and imitated in many ways the practices of the Edonian women and the Thracian women about Mount Haemus, from whom, as it would seem, the word "threskeuein" came to be applied to the celebration of extravagant and superstitious ceremonies. Now Olympias, who affected these divine possessions more zealously than other women, and carried out these divine inspirations in wilder fashion, used to provide the reveling companies with great tame serpents, which would often lift their heads from out the ivy and the mystic winnowing-baskets, or coil themselves about the wands and garlands of the women, thus terrifying the men." Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 2ff. Translated by Bernadotte Perrin.

[28]Ancient medical literature on antidotes is detailed: see Galen, *Antodotes* K 14, Scribonius *Compositiones* #165–199. Antidotes for both animal- and plant-derived poisons/toxins were commonly grouped together in medical sources.

[29]The young age of participants in sexually explicit rites/ceremonies would not have been a foreign concept to the ancient Greek or Roman. See Ion. fr. eleg. 26., where the milking of children is a theme used in the context of the Bacchic chorus (revelry).

[30]Macrobius, *Saturnalia*. 5.11.15-17. The Greco-Roman world considered both masculine and feminine ejaculate as a single substance, like breast milk, capable of imprinting upon an infant the traits of the person who produced it. The words for blood and semen can be used interchangeably.

[31]For oracular, virgin milk, note Apollonius, *Argonautica* 4.1731 ff.

Suckling from a intoxicating nurse was a common theme in ancient literature.[32] Zeus was suckled by an ambrosia-delivering she-goat.[33] Athena herself was depicted as a paradigmatic example of these nursing, adolescent priestesses, whose milk was used as an antidote in venom-related rituals.[34] Apollo was associated with packs of wolves known to guard and breast feed infants.[35]

Because the *ios*-rite induced a potentially dangerous psychosis, officiating priestesses physically restrained initiates during the ritual administration of arrow poisons. Priestesses bound the feet and hands of novices and placed them in supine positions favorable to the rectal administration of drugs by means of penis-shaped applicators made of leather, glass, or polished stone.[36] Initiates were given an oral sedative and physically restrained before the anal application of *ios*-rite arrow poisons.[37] Once unwanted symptoms of the arrow poisons set in, priestesses breast-fed initiates, an act that reportedly furnished them with an ameliorating "antidote" capable of limiting any predictable, negative side effects.[38] Ancient authorities recognized the valued contribution of

[32]Scribonius Largus, a Roman military physician (medicus—I CE) describes the use of "lac" in a section of his *Compositiones* dedicated to mystery rite poisons/venoms. Greek and Roman medical references to "milks" include mammalian breast milk as well as the "milky" exudates of numerous botanicals. Classical medical "milks" are fluids produced by a plant or animal that can be used to "nourish" or "alter" living tissue. Scribonius lists "The Milk" as one of numerous transformative toxins.

[33]Callimachus, *Hymn to Zeus*. 1–55. As per the *ios*-rite, the priestess of the rite possesses the divine milk and is herself guarded by a dog (κύων). In the case of Zeus the dog/guardian is "golden," reflecting the Orphic mystery.

[34]Nonnos, *Dionysiaca* 13.171.

[35]Antoninus Liberalis, *Metamorphoses*, 30. Consider also the myth of the suckling of Romulus and Remus by a "wolf" named Lupa (lit. "prostitute" or in some cases "priestess').

[36]The Priapic dildo (alabastron/fascinum) was employed in magico-medical ritual as a pharmaceutical applicator. Drugs were rubbed onto the dildo before it was inserted into the rectum where the drug was absorbed. The phallus was used in Roman wedding ceremonies: Augustine, *City of God*. 6.9. The worship of Priapus was cultivated by ancient "sorceresses," or "workers in drugs." For descriptions of ancient dildos and evidence concerning ritual, forced sodomy, see: Richard Burton, *Priapeia*. pp. 137–68.

[37]Petronius satirizes the rite in his "Satyricon." The rites are Priapic and betray the use of medical vocabulary that implies association with contemporary medical/pharmaceutical practices. On the overlap of Priapic worship, medicine, and eroticism, see Sir Richard Burton's *Priapeia* (Wordsworth, 1995).

[38]Galen's multiple works on "antidotes" contain numerous descriptions of the process of balancing lethal drugs with their apparent antidotes. His formulae are sometimes based on famous "Theriaca" the priestly formulae for cult-drugs that schematically present the poisons and their antidotes. See Galen, K14.

venom-investigating mystics and sorceresses who pushed the medical frontier by pioneering the use of lethal venoms as potential curatives.[39]

After receiving both elements of the communion, namely the arrow toxin and its balancing "antidote," initiates of the *ios*-rite were manually masturbated by priestesses performing sexually explicit dances. During these ritual performances, priestesses and their female attendants reportedly urinated and ejaculated on psychotic, restrained initiates while forcefully bringing them to sexual climax.[40] Licking the genitalia of pubertal and prepubertal priestesses in order to receive medications was a prominent ritualistic practice.[41] The initiate's experience was considered visionary.

Ios-rite drugs applied to the anus of initiates were characterized by their purple or deep-scarlet color (*ios* can also be translated as "violet"), which would stain the anus, vagina, and mouth.[42] It should be noted that the vaginal excreta were themselves considered drugs and drug components. The Greek Magical Papyri (PGM) preserve the actual expressions for specific types of vaginal excreta. For example, ἰχῶρα παρθένου ἀώρου, was

[39]On the contribution of venom research to medicine in antiquity, see Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*, 3.44: "And who," he said, "can deprive the art of divination of the credit of discovering simples which heal the bites of venomous creatures, and in particular of using the virus itself as a cure for many diseases? For I do not think that men without the forecasts of a prophetic wisdom would ever have ventured to mingle with medicines that save life these most deadly of poisons."

[40]The medical use of bodily fluids, including urine and saliva was not unusual. See Pliny, HN, 28.6, 22. The paelex (L) or πάλλας (G) was the assistant of the priestess, and was represented as approximately 9–12 years. See Seneca. *Hercules on Oeta*, 278 ff.

[41]Cunnilingus as a medico-religous act was common enough for Aeschylus to gingerly play with the theme in his *Agamemnon* 1478–80: ἐκ τοῦ γὰρ ἔρως αἱματολοιχὸς νείρᾳ τρέφεται, πρὶν καταλῆξαι τὸ παλαιὸν ἄχος, νέος ἰχώρ. . . . "The love for licking seminal fluid is nourished by the groin . . ." Of course, νείρᾳ for "nethers" or "groin" is properly the region of the body under the belly, or the genitalia.

[42]The purple color of the ios-rite concoctions was associated very early on with Medea and the preparation of her "Colchian Fire." The Latin word for "poison" itself is influenced by the Medic ios-rite traditions: "venenum" is also a "purple dye." For example: *alba neque Assyrio fucatur lana veneno*. Georgics. 2.465. Assyria is used by poets for Media and the Medes and the other ios-rite stars like Europa and the Tyrian purple. (See OLD): Assyrĭa, ae, f., = Ἀσσυρία, I.a country of Asia, between Media, Mesopotamia, and Babylonia, now Kurdistan, Plin. 5, 12, 13, § 66 al.—Hence, Assyrĭus, a, um, adj., = Ἀσσύριος, Assyrian, Verg. E. 4, 25; Luc. 6, 429; Stat. S. 3, 3, 212 al.; and Assyrĭi, ōrum, m., the Assyrians, Cic. Div. 1, 1, 1; Plin. 6, 13, 16, § 41; Vulg. Gen. 2, 14; ib. Isa. 7, 17 al.—Sometimes poetic for Median, Phrygian, Phœnician, Indian, etc.; so, "puella," i. e. the Phœnician Europa, Sen. Herc. Oet. 554: "venenum, i.e.," Tyrian purple, Sil. 11, 41: "stagnum," i. e. Lake Gennesareth, in Palestine, Just. 18, 3: "ebur," i. e. Indian, Ov. Am. 2, 5, 40: "malus, i. e. Medica," the citrontree, Plin. 15, 14, 14, § 48; cf. Voss ad Verg. G. 2, 126.

the serous exudate of nonmenstruating, prepubertal girls.[43] Ios-rite *Echidnae* priestesses were themselves known to self-apply the "burning purple" (the *ios* drugs) to their own vaginas before the performance of sacred sexual rites.[44]

Cunnilingus was sometimes referred to as "going Phoenician," an expression that plays on the perpetuation of the *ios*-rite and the use of one of its main ingredients—a famous purple dye derived from sea mollusks.[45] Echidnae priestesses administered their arrow poisons (snake venoms) to initiates via forced, ritual cunnilingus and by small stones passed into the rectum. Interestingly, these priestesses claimed to have complete immunity to the snake venoms used in their rites.

26.7 IDENTIFYING DRUGS USED IN THE IOS-RITE

Ancient texts written by physicians, priests, mystics, and naturalists preserve countless cult-related drug recipes, including those used by specific cult associations like that of the *Echidnae*. Despite an abundance of literary sources, it is notoriously difficult to accurately identify the

[43]PGM 4.2645.

[44]ἰχώρ (LSJ): 2. serous or sero-purulent discharge, Hp.VC19, Arist.HA630a6 (pl.), Gal.10.184, etc.; ἰχῶρες ὑδαρεῖς ὕπωχροι, from women in childbirth, Arist.HA586b32; of the putrefied blood of a viper, Id.Mir.845a8; of naphtha (prob.), regarded in legend as due to the putrefaction of giants' corpses, ib.838a29. This ichor, the discharge of prepubertal girls was associated with both Medea and her Naphtha. Both were said to burn, and to contain the breath of fire. Serum of a virgin, blood of a viper, and naphtha all have their source in the Medea.

[45]See *The Cunnilinges* in Richard Burton, *Priapeia*. pp. 165–168. The ios-rite is symbolized in the Orphic *Argonautica* (707–713), where the initiates are presented as the guardian dogs who are turned from calm to madness by the goddess/priestess. "At one of the gateposts there stood [a statue of] the far-seeing queen, scattering with her motion the radiance of fire, whom the Colchians propitiate as Artemis of the gate, resounding with the chase, terrible for men to see, and terrible to hear, unless one approaches the sacred rites and purification, the rites kept hidden by the priestess who was initiated, Medea, unfortunate in marriage, along with the girls of Cyta. No mortal, whether native or stranger, entered that way, crossing over the threshold, for the terrible Goddess kept them away by all means, breathing madness into her fire-eyed dogs." (Translated from the Latin by Jason Colavito, The Orphic Argonautica (2011). The Greek captures the use of the Orphic technical vocabulary—the vox Orphica in its references to the drugs: ει μή τις τελεταίς πελάσει καί θύσθλα καθαρμών, όσσα περ αρήτειρα καθάρματα μύστις έκευθε, δεινολεχής Μήδεια Κυτηιάσιν μίγα κούραις. Ουδέ τις ενδοτέρω κείνην οδόν εισεπέρησεν ενδάπιος, ξείνός τε βροτών υπέρ ουδόν αμείψας: είργει γάρ πάντη δεινή θεός ηγεμόνεια, λύσσαν επιπνείουσα υπέρ γαληνοίς σκυλάκεσσιν. Galene, the antidote for the Medic ios-rite is even referenced: γαληνοίς.

specific species of plants and animals found in classical manuscripts. The process frequently degrades into something resembling educated guesswork rather than verifiable scholarship.

While there are thousands of pages of toxicology-related texts in Greek and Latin, particularly the drug books of Galen, Dioscorides, Nicander, and Scribonius Largus, the overwhelming majority of these texts have yet to be translated into English. Classical scholars, trained in mastering dead languages like Latin and Greek, are frequently discouraged by the highly technical subject matter and vocabulary contained in surviving toxicology-related classical sources.

Despite such research obstacles our texts abound with innumerable references to plant- and animal-derived substances used for centuries as both simple and compound mixtures in the maintenance of health and the performance of religious ritual. By compiling and examining references to specific drug formulae scattered in multiple genres (medical, philosophical, dramatic, religious, magical), it is possible to consider the bigger picture of widespread drug use within the context of ancient cult performance.

There are numerous drugs associated with the activities of Dragon priestesses and the colleges of *Echidnae*. Many of these compound drug mixtures are consistently linked with the historical figure of Medea, whom the Greeks and Romans (and arguably the Etruscans) considered the progenitor of the "Medes" and the founder of the magicoreligious order called the Magi.

26.8 MEDEA THE FIRST TOXIC PRIESTESS

Medea, princess of Colchis—a late Bronze Age (c. 1200–1000 BC) kingdom of the Black Sea—was personally associated with the cult rites of Diana, Hera, and Hecate; known for her physical beauty and potentially nefarious pharmaceutical knowledge, she was reportedly involved with the monarchies of several Greek city-states, including Athens and Corinth, and the foundation of several temples. In Corinth, she infamously murdered the reigning monarch and his daughter with an incendiary compound, called naphtha, typically reserved for ancient naval combat. She is said to have invented this ancient napalm.[46]

The name "Medea" carries the root-meanings "good counsel," "healing," "governance," and "genitals." The connections between Medea

[46]According to the *Suda* (nu,90), the military weapon Naphtha, was invented by Medea and and was named by her Medic contemporaries: *Naptha* has three genders: Found most commonly in its feminine form, a neuter is found as well, and its masculine form is used by Plutarch. What the Medes call *naptha* the Greeks call "Medea's Oil."

and words for healing and drugs is not confined to Greek.[47] In addition to the basic root for "healing" from Latin "medicina," a look at "venenum" the word for "poison" or "toxin" betrays linguistic influence from the Colchian (Medic) mystery rites and even the person of Medea herself.[48] In other words, the English word "medicine" is derived directly from the name of a Bronze Age queen known for her pharmaceutical expertise.

Medea, a "master-sorceress," had a longstanding reputation throughout the Mediterranean for possessing particular skill with the use of so-called drug-induced "fires," including the group of drugs that caused "oistros," the ecstatic state induced in *ios*-rite initiates who reportedly suffer from sensations of extreme "burning."[49] Like the *Echidnae* in Greece, Asia Minor, Italy, and North Africa—the priestesses who perpetuated her oracular rites—Medea prepared drugs in her vagina, and administered her own vaginal excreta as the communal "burning purple" of *ios*-rite mystery initiation.[50]

[47]Aphrodite is closely associated with all aspects of this root as the goddess born from the severed genitals of her father: ἠδὲ φιλομμηδέα, ὅτι μηδέων ἐξεφαάνθη. Hesiod, Theogony 200. See: (OLD): Venenum. . .2. Lit., a magical potion, charm: "item ut Medea Peliam concoxit senem: Quem medicamento et suis venenis dicitur Fecisse rursus ex sene adulescentulum," Plaut. Ps. 3, 2, 81: "dira Medeae," Hor. Epod. 5, 62: "Colcha," id. C. 2, 13, 8: "Colchica," id. Epod. 17, 35; Cic. Or. 37, 129; Hor. C. 1, 27, 22; id. Epod. 5, 22; 5, 87; id. S. 1, 8, 19; 2, 1, 48; Ov. M. 7, 209; 14, 55; 14, 403: "qui quodam quasi veneno perficiat, ut veros heredes moveat," Cic. Off. 3, 19, 76: "id quod amatorium appellatur, venenum est," Dig. 48, 8, 3.—. The name Medea, is literally synonymous with "medicine." This is due to the expert pharmaceutical experimentation and medico-magical practices of a single pre-Homeric priestess/princess.

[48]On the significance of the Med-root and its connections to Medea see: Karen (1951) JulPMC195119. In addition, PGM 4.2441–2621 contains a link between the performance of ios-rites and the Echidnae and the name Medixa, which appears to be a reference to Medea.

[49]The madness of "oistros" was considered a form of Bacchic inspiration; it was directly associated with the "entheotic" state (ἔνθεος, G.) at least as early as Euripides: *Trojan Women*, 365 ff. In the same play, Euripides incorporates all the elements of mystery initiation: ἔρως ἐτόξευσ᾽ αὐτὸν ἐνθέου κόρης (line 255). *Eros (erotic desire) is the source of the arrow poison that stings the entheogenic maiden (priestess)*. The *ios*-rite summarized in a single line.

[50]Medea's use of snake venom in Bacchic mystery ritual was the subject of much of Seneca's *Medea*. See: *Medea* 705 ff. In the mythic narrative, Medea even plays with her own name: In Ap. Arg. 3.779 ff. Medea asks the question of how she will evade her parents' attention should she act the "Medea:" πῶς γάρ κεν ἐμοὺς λελάθοιμι τοκῆας φάρμακα **μησαμένη**; the name Medea is very much a title used to describe the pharmaceutically related actions of very specific gods and mortals.

The "burning purple," a mixture of Medea's vaginal excreta combined with ritual drugs, was also used as an ink. One ancient source tells us that the Golden Fleece of the Argonauts (the famous mythic expedition led by Medea and Jason) was a ram's skin, upon which was written the formula for the cult drug compound used in the mystery rite, otherwise known as the "burning purple (Carl Ruck, p. 381 ff.)." In this way, the quest for the fleece was very much an attempt to obtain the complex drug formula of the emerging *Echidna* priesthood, along with its chief priestess, who was herself the biological source of the drug.[51] Herodotus places Medea with Io, Europa, and Helen, as four abducted oracles of the Heroic Age; each young girl was associated with the manifestation of the maddening Bacchic "oistros," a psychotic, delusional state induced by the *ios*-rite.[52]

26.9 TOXIC PLANTS AND ANIMALS USED IN MEDEA'S IOS-RITE

Medea's ritual communion was the combination of one particular *ios* (arrow toxin) and its "antidote," aptly named *Galene*, or "Calm."[53] Medea's *ios* was the product of an ἔχις, a frustratingly general Greek term for "viper."[54] Ancient medical sources tend to group all vipers into a single family of snake-derived drug sources; envenomation by any

[51]Medea is typically presented as the source of the compound sacrament. For example, Scholia on Apollonius' Argonautica: ON 3.1013. προπρὸ δ' ἀφειδήσασα θυώδεος ἔξελε μίτρηςφάρμακον. On Medea taking the drug from her mitra and giving to Jason. The scholiast says the language indicates an explication (epitasis) of the erotic and the acquisition/dosing of the drug. All relates back to the Titans and the pitch strain of the song used in the rite. . .stretching of the neura. The scholiast implies that the drug is derived from Medea during sexual congress. The neura traditionally represent the stretched erection of the mystic phallus seen in temples associated with mystery rites, such as in those found in Lucian's *De Dea Syria*.

[52]Io, Europa, Helen, and Medea were the four abducted priestesses discussed by Herodotus in the opening of his *Histories* (1.1 ff.).

[53]Pausanias 2.1.9, makes reference to a temple in Corinth with an image (ἄγαλμα) of Galene. Medea has extensive historical connections with the Corinthian royal line and the foundation of several temples. Cult operations involving the goddess Galene may have directly involved or indirectly invoked pharmaceutical associations of Galene/Eudion as a cult potion.

[54]Nicander discusses the viper and its ios (venom) in the context of the "Way." The priest discusses the sexuality of vipers and the unique nature of live-birth, reflecting the mystery rites of the Echidnae: *Theriaca*, 128 ff.

species of viper was treated simply as "viper-strike." To make matters more confusing, receiving the sacrament from an *Echidna* priestess was referred to as being "struck by the viper."

Medea's *ios* was called "Colchian Fire," and was said to contain as a principal ingredient, ἐφήμερον, or *meadow saffron* (*Colchicum autumnale*), called κολχικόν, or *colchicum* by ancient physicians.[55] The root contained a liquid consumed for the pleasant feelings it conveyed and was associated with the ritual sexual union of oracular priestesses with Delphic Apollo.[56] Meadow saffron was said to cause the same symptoms as toxic mushroom ingestion, and treatment for poisoning from *colchicum* was identical to that of certain mushrooms. According to one source, drinking Medea's "Colchian Fire" caused an intense itching of the lips and distressing intestinal discomfort.[57]

Colchian Fire, as a ritual sacrament, was mixed within and administered from a Medic priestess' vagina (κόλπος; νηδύς). The vagina served as a means of both mixing drugs and administering them to initiates. This ritual medico-religious act was common enough to be recognized by noted poets like Horace.[58]

Mushrooms are frequently associated with *ios*-ritual associated myth. According to one ancient priest connected with oracular Bacchic mysteries and their drugs, mania-inducing mushrooms are naturally infused with the venom of vipers (literally Echidnaic *ios*).[59] The combination of mushrooms and venom in ritual-associated myth is reinforced throughout texts related to Bacchic worship. Phsychotropic mushrooms like Amanita were a common element of compound sacramental compounds. In fact, the very name "Mycenaean," a name that came to

[55]Nicander, *Alexipharmaca*. 249 ff. Scribonius, *Compositiones*, #193.

[56]Euripides' Ion, 887 et seq., Ion is an example of the "child passed through the fires." His mother, Creusa, applied her colchicum (flowers of the meadow saffron) directly to her vagina before engaging in intercourse with the god. Ion, the product of the divine union, was dedicated to the temple of Apollo with "serpents" as guardians. These serpents are members of a *drakaina* priesthood.

[57]Scribonius Largus #193 includes a description of the initiate who has drunk Medea's ritual potion, known as Ephemeron, or Colchicum. Scribonius was a physician (medicus) attached to the Roman army. He includes numerous lengthy descriptions of the *mala medicamenta* employed by mystery rite participants. In addition, he lists the symptoms of these drugs and potential treatments.

[58]Cales venenis officina Colchicis, Horace, *Epode* 17.35. The vagina is the instrument used to mix and administer the drug. The medicated vagina becomes the Latin "officina" or "a workshop; manufactory." LSJ.

[59]Nicander, *Alexipharmaca*. 521–28.

represent Heroic Greek culture in general, was derived from Perseus' fondness for licking wild fungi.[60]

In addition to viper venom, psychotropic mushrooms, and meadow saffron, Medea's *ios* contained the famous "purple," or πορφύρα, a textile dye obtained from marine mollusks (murex). The dye was responsible for the vivid purple color of the *ios*.[61]

Ancient *Echidnae* were said to be identified by the dark purple drool mixed with foam that came from their mouths.[62] The product of this apparent excessive salivation, a dark spume, was harvested and considered a "lethal drug" to others but not harmful to the *Echidna* herself. The Echidna's skin was covered with hardened, dark patches, and her eyes were chronically infiltrated with blood and reportedly photosensitive. In some cases it appears that Medea's *ios* may have been introduced from the mouth of the Echidna directly into the eyes of the initiate. Medea's meadow saffron-containing compound was also called the "drug of Prometheus," and was closely associated with the color of the meadow saffron and the stunning purple dye of the murex.[63]

[60]Pausanias 2.16.3. Perseus once quenched his thirst by licking fluid flowing from a wild mushroom cap. He named the location where this mushrooms was found Mycene (Μυκήνη, from G. μύκης: "mushroom"). Mycene, in addition to being the name of an archaic Greek city, was also a nymph. Nymphs, the sexually promiscuous natural spirits of Greek myth, were frequently conceived of as growing alongside a host tree, and are often connected with fungal growth and a serous, ambrosial fluid released during sexual excitation. For example, to "nymph" (νυμφιάω) in Greek, is to rave in sexual mania, like a horse in season. (LSJ). The connection must not escape our attention, because the vaginal exudate of sexually receptive horses was used in ritual pharmacological preparations, and was considered a potent aphrodisiac associated with Orphic mystery rites, the magi, and Medea. In antiquity, amanita was intentionally cocultivated with the fig. See Nicander, frag. 78–79; Ruck (2018), 177 et seq; Carl A.P. Ruck, *The Son Conceived in Drunkenness*, 155 et seq.

[61]The last time the classic, Greco-Roman entheogenic "burning purple" of the mystery rites performed by the Dragon priestess is referenced appears to be the classicizing Latin Hymns of Michael Marullus (1458–1500 CE), who, like his mystic Greek and Roman predecessors, relied upon the Vox Orphica to detail drug-induced rites derived from blood and milk of the Bacchic orgy: Sancte pater, sive aetherio delapsus Olympo enthea divino praecordia concutis oestro…" (*Hymn to Jupiter Optimus Maximus*). Marullus fought with Vlad Dracula, who was himself made infamous for reported cultic banquets accompanied by the consumption of human blood and the impaling of infants to the breasts of their mothers.

[62]Ancient priestesses involved with drugs and necromancy (a.k.a. "witches") were often portrayed as foaming and drooling. See: Lucan, *Civil War*. 6.719 ff. In addition, their skin was characteristically marked by dark patches: Valerius Flaccus, *Arogonautica*. 2:105.

[63]Scholia on Apollonius: 5:859. "The Promethean drug is made in the κόχλος." Medea's drug was known as the Colchian Fire, or the Burning Purple.

26.10 MEDEA'S ANTIDOTE AS MEDICINE

The primary ingredients of Medea's Echidnaic *ios* were meadow saffron, marine mollusks, psychotropic mushrooms, and viper venom. Medea's "antidote," called *galene*, was administered concomitantly with the *ios* in order to ameliorate its apparent negative side effects. *Galene* was a nymph of the sea who brought "calm" to the waves.[64] Medea, like the nymph, was considered to be the source of the antidote (the "calm")—in the manner of the *Echidnae* priestesses—Medea breastfed initiates. However, Medea was also said to cut herself during the performance of Bacchic mystery rites, and Seneca tells us her flowing blood was itself the source of the cult's drug.[65]

Necromantic sources relate that cult "antidotes" like *galene* were actually mixtures of blood and breast milk. The playwright Aeschylus—nearly executed for revealing the secrets of the Eleusinian mysteries—portrayed the Drakaina as an inspired priestess who dispenses milk mixed with blood by means of the strike of a viper.[66]

According to Galen, the personal body physician of the emperor Marcus Aurelius (II CE), there existed multiple recipes for compound antidotes called "*galene*," preserved by mystics and eccentric kings alike.[67] Galen claims that *galene* derived from *Echidnae* and held the reputation for being able to counteract the most deadly of drugs, including potions made from venoms, opium, henbane, and even deadly monkshood.

Medea's *galene* was also called "*castor*" and "*eudion*." Galen's formulae for the antidote *galene* include dozens of botanicals and seemingly numerous compound oils. Many of these same oils were universally ubiquitous in antiquity, and were used for the maintenance of sexual arousal, the prevention of sexually transmitted disease, and as abortifacients.[68] Mythic depictions portray Medea as constantly applying

[64]On *Galene* or *Galenaia*, see Callimachus, *Epigrams* 6. See also Galen's numerous works about pharmaceutical "antidotes." Galen K 14 p.32 ff. Galene is linked with the Orphic Eudion.

[65]Seneca, *Medea* 787 ff. Seneca's Medea includes numerous ios-rite drugs in her ritual performance, during which she performs ritual incisions during drug preparation and the acquisition of venom (via milking). Medea's necromantic mystery rites are called "sacra letifica" by Seneca (577), or "death-bringing mysteries."

[66]Aeschylus, *Libation Bearers* 514 ff.

[67]Galen, *On Antidotes*, K. 14 p.32 ff.

[68]Galen and Dioscorides are not shy about the use of abortifacients. Chemically induced abortions were common in antiquity and consistently associated with the activities of midwives, "witches," and mystery initiations—as child sacrifice. Lucan provides a sensationalized portrayal of cult consumption of aborted fetuses: *Civil War*, 6.554 ff.

compound oils to her skin and genitalia; in one case, she instructed her twelve drug-skilled disciples to administer her bathwater as a healing drug.[69] It is likely that the *galene* found in Galen's drug recipes was based on a simpler recipe for ointments and "anointing oils" used to cover the breasts of nursing *Echidnae* like Medea.

26.11 CHRISTIAN IOS RITES

The widespread use of ios-based pharmaceuticals by mystery religion initiates of Greco-Roman antiquity created and sustained significant social conflict. Priestesses involved in the preparation and administration of drugs—derived from their own body fluids—became valued commodities, to be traded and/or influenced for religious and political advantage. With time, these priestesses established oracular institutions, built temples, promoted educational associations, and guided the foundation of democratically inclined city-states; it is fair to say that ios-driven Bacchic (ecstatic) mystery religions influenced much of the intellectual and cultural development of Western civilization.

Christianity employed the very same specific technical vocabulary used by ios-rite priestesses in both the New Testament and Apocrypha. Like its pagan predecessors, Christian communion became an exclusionary pharmaceutical movement. Followers of "the Way" claimed the "blood and body" of their chief priest was the exclusive "salvation" of the "kingdom of god." St. John, in his visionary Apocalypse, foretells the overthrow of the infamous, "Mother of Prostitution," who "intoxicates by means of sex acts."[70] John specifically identified his so-called

[69]For a current, in-depth treatment of Medea's personal application of drugs (dermal and vaginal), see Carl Ruck, *The Great Gods of Samothrace and the Cult of the Little People* (Regent, 2017).

[70]St. John, Apocalypse 17:3–5. It is notable that this Mother of ritual prostitution offered up a cup full of her sexual acts: "ἔχουσα ποτήριον χρυσοῦν ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτῆς γέμον βδελυγμάτων καὶ τὰ ἀκάθαρτα τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς," The language of John's text matches the Orphic Hymns and Orphic literature that preserves the ios-mystery rite. For example, the rite of the mystery is an ablution of that which is "impure" (akatharta). The same term was used in magico-medical literature for mixed solutions used in ritual drug administration. The word can also be found in association with the drawing down of the sorceress-priestess' menses and appears to be used as a drug—in addition to the bathwater of the Echidna priestess (Medea is recorded bathing and providing her used bathwater as medicine.

"whore" as the purple-clothed Dragon Priestess who "sits on a venomous scarlet beast" and bears the name "Mystery."[71]

The Baptists (Baptae L.), mystery cult practitioners contemporary with Jesus and his students, were best known for the ritual ablutions they performed. Pagan and Christian sources tell us the Batptists practiced restricted diets, wore women's lingerie, drank ritual substances from penis-shaped drink ware, and promoted a "purification" of the soul through the practices of the Magi.[72] During the rise of "the Way," a Baptist leader named John was famously decapitated at the request of a young female child named Salome, who had earned the right to ask for the Baptist's head after performing a presumably sexually explicit dance for the reigning monarch and his guests.[73]

John the Baptist's premier student, Simon Magus, was ostracized by both the Baptists themselves and the leaders of "the Way," for his reliance upon a priestess-prostitute aptly named Luna/Helen.[74] Simon Peter's resistance to Simon Magus was mirrored in St. Paul's admonition and re-baptism of Christians whom he claimed were engaged in rites with "drug-using prostitutes."[75] Despite Paul's admonition to avoid these priestesses, and despite the fact that one of these young priestesses, specifically a Pythia, persistently followed Paul while

[71]St. John, Apocalypse 17:5. καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ μέτωπον αὐτῆς ὄνομα γεγραμμένον, μυστήριον, βΑβΥΛΩΝ Η ΜΕΓΑΛΗ, Η ΜΗΗΡ ΩΝ ΠΟΡΝΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΩΝ βΔΕΛΥΓΜΑΩΝ ΗΣ ΓΗΣ. "And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." King James version (KJV).

[72]Juvenal, *Satires* 82–116. Descriptions of the baptists in feminine garb like the girdle (ζώνη) worn on the night of a girl's first sexual union with her husband. The religious order of the Magi was founded by Medea, the first "Maga." The word is the same as that used for those who followed a "star" to find Jesus.

[73]On Salome: See Matthew 14:6–11; Mark 6:21–29. Salome was only a little girl (κοράσιον), and the nature of her dancing is obscure. Whether or not the dance was sexual in nature, it was performed in front of prominent community leaders and generals, and was so successfully arousing as to provoke Herod to promise her considerable wealth. Salome was herself a member of a priestly line so it may be the case that she was performing a specific Hellenized "maiden-dance," similar to those seen in the Greek world. Like St. Mary, Salome may have been dedicated to the Temple in Jerusalem and nurtured by the vestals there.

[74]Acts 8:9–24. The Apocrypha and early Church fathers contain a myriad of stories about Simon Magus and his relationship with the oracular witch-priestess Helen (aka. Luna—following Ios-ritual titles).

[75]Paul, Galatians 5:16. The term translated as "prostitution" is often tainted by modern English and Western mores. It does not have an explicitly negative connotation. Acts of "porneia" are strictly sexual, and are sometimes linked with divinities, heroes, and priestesses. Christianity, under the influence of scholars the likes of St. Jerome promoted a negative view of pagan sexual standards and practices.

publicly humiliating him, the followers of "the Way" were known to have the ability to drink snake venom without suffering any negative symptoms.[76] In fact, like the Echidnae under Medea, the earliest Christians were known to have pioneered the use of venom in the treatment of disease: "they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."[77]

Peter and Paul, prominent leaders of "the Way," directed born-again mystery initiates to abstain from the sexual rites of contemporary Echidnaic mysteries.[78] This command to abstain from "sexual idolatry" by the followers of Jesus and "the Way" would have necessitated the use of an alternate source of antidote for any ios-rite participant. The only source for such an antidote was the semen or "milk" of a prepubertal boy; if Jesus and the apostles were following the Echidnaic Ios-rite, Jesus, as "savior" would have had to derive his antidote by the performance of a sexual act on a 9–12-year-old boy. The gospel of Mark records that Jesus was arrested in a public cemetery after midnight in the company of an anonymous naked male child.[79]

Christian dislike for rituals involving "prostitutes," the likes of Mary Magdalene and Salome, (Mary used a dildo-shaped drug applicator on Jesus called an *alabastron*) would have necessitated a switch from

[76]On St. Paul's confrontation with a Pythia (an oracular priestess): Acts 16:16 ff. Paul was bitten by a viper (*echidna*) while traveling but suffered no observable ill affects, which surprised observers: Acts 28:3–5.

[77]Gospel of Mark, 16:18. (NIV translation in text). The Greek of this New Testament passage employs specific medical ios-cult terminology (in bold here): ὄφεις ἀροῦσιν κἂν **θανάσιμόν τι πίωσιν** οὐ μὴ αὐτοὺς βλάψῃ, ἐπὶ ἀρρώστους χεῖρας ἐπιθήσουσιν καὶ καλῶς ἕξουσιν. A θανάσιμόν is a specific category of drug found in surviving medical texts. In other words, the first generation of Christians following Jesus openly acknowledged drinking drug concoctions derived from snakes. See also Scholia on Nicander. It should also be noted that in the first century CE, Roman physician Scribonius Largus describes a series of symptoms suffered by the use of drugs (mala medicamenta) associated with the ios-rite mysteries that is similar to those suffered by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane after he "drank of the cup," and experienced a vision of an angel. See Scribonius Largus (#188 ff. esp. #193). Scholia of Nicander indicate the "ephemeron"—the possible drug of the cup of Jesus—was the personal discovery of Medea. The word used to describe the physical substance that exudes from Jesus in the Garden is also used to describe the exudate of the anus of Dionysus in Aristophanes' *Frogs*.

[78]Paul, *Galatians* 5:16: Paul, like others, joins πορνεία and ἀκαθαρσία with ἀσέλγεια, εἰδωλολατρεία and φαρμακεία as prohibited acts, all of which are ritual cult terms found in the Vox Orphica. Paul prohibited the drug-induced magic of the mysteries and even re-baptized followers of "the Way" in Ephesus who had been baptized by John the Baptist (*Acts* 19:1–5).

[79]Mark 14:51–52.

girl-derived to boy-derived antidote. Jesus, whose name in Greek is "Jason" (Jason was the guardian of the Medea—the cult drug formula inscribed on the fleece, and his name contains the root of the word "ios" and the Greek verb for "healing"), as a classical mystery "savior" involved in the perpetuation of an ios-rite, would have needed the semen of a young boy to balance the symptoms brought on by imbibing the necromantic (resurrection) "cup" of the mystery.

26.12 TOXICOLOGICAL QUESTIONS

The ἰός-rite employed numerous plant- and animal-derived toxins in an attempt to achieve and maintain an artificially induced state of psychosis in initiates while limiting any dangerous side-effects. This multivalent pharmacological approach to medicine and religion—the creation of a pharmaceutical communion—presents a myriad of important toxicological research questions. For example:

1. *What molecular mechanisms contributed to the inhibition of potentially lethal symptoms, including hemorrhage and blood-pressure collapse, in subjects ritually exposed to viperid proteases?*
2. *How do viperid venoms, toxins derived from the glandular secretions of marine mollusks, colchicine, and fungal GABA receptor agonists react with each other and with mammalian muscle and nervous tissue?*
3. *How did chronic viper venom exposure enable prepubertal females to lactate, while conferring upon them an immunity that could be passed on to other subjects? Does the developing mammary gland produce antibodies following chronic exposure to viperid venom?*
4. *What were the chemical consituents of the ejaculate collected from human subjects chronically exposed to viperid venom? Are these constituents biologically active?*
5. *What are the potential medical uses of the poly-pharmaceutical combinations of toxins employed in ancient mystery-religions? Why are psychoactive mushrooms associated with the use of viper venom?*

26.13 CONCLUSION

Ancient Mediterranean religious microcultures developed a unique and pioneering method of pharmacy that focused on the interaction of viperid toxins with the human body and other pharmacologically active substances. Drug use within the context of ritual communion was far more complex than the simple and much later theoretical models of medical pharmacology offered by classical Hippocratic physicians, which had

come to rely too heavily on the exercise of dogmatic philosophical theories rather than rigorous experimentation on human subjects—as did *ios*-rite priestesses within their protected ritual settings. The ancient Colchian priestess Medea is very much a forgotten pioneer of Western pharmacy and perhaps the least recognized scientific genius of her day. Her experimentation and discoveries drove all of Western medicine, and her practices influenced the very formation of Western medical vocabulary.

The practices of Medic snake-venom-driven cults influenced prominent ancient mystery religions, both pagan and Christian alike. There are indelible linguistic marks upon the language of the Christian holy writings that place the activities of Jesus and the early Church squarely within the realm of communal drug users who employed sexuality as a means of compounding and administering drugs. For example, based on the technical vocabulary employed by the Christian texts themselves, it is likely that Jesus was performing fellatio on the naked boy that was with him in the Garden of Gethsemane in order to secure the antidote to the sacramental cup from which he drank before he had his vision of an angel. If Jesus had been unable to access the antidote after partaking of the ritual ios-cup, he would have died from its contents within a few hours.[80]

While there is academic value in elucidating the history of ancient Mediterranean cultures, a knowledge of the complex pharmaceutical practices of ancient priestesses may also yield medicinally relevant information for modern toxicologists talented enough to disentangle the complex biochemical pathways involved in ancient communal polyvalent toxicology.

[80]According to our written evidence, Jesus was crucified, but died prematurely, as noted by the Roman authorities involved in his execution. Crucifixion was not his cause of death (Mark 15:44–45): "*Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph.*" (NIV). In addition, Jesus' last words, according to the gospel of Mark were: **Ἐλωὶ Ἐλωὶ λαμὰ σαβαχθανεί**; while the language is still debated, it is interesting that λαμὰ is the title of the Echidnaic priestess "Lamia" (G. λάμια) and **σαβαχθανεί** appears to be a derivative of the name of Chthonian Sabazeus, the divine father of the Bacchic mystery initiation. Lamia was herself linked directly with Medea through the Orphic Melinoe, who was herself called Medea, and the oracle of Medea found in Pindar (Pythian 4).

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